



**ESEA Priority Schools  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**  
*September 9, 2013*

Seventy-four (74) schools now comprise the State's list of "priority schools." In addition to sixty (60) schools implementing an intervention model under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, North Carolina has an additional fourteen (14) schools identified under the North Carolina Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Request (ESEA Flex) submitted and approved by the U.S. Department of Education in May of 2012. The FAQs addressed in this document are specific to the fourteen schools noted below (Item #5) who were identified under the ESEA Flex request.

NC Priority School Types	# of Schools	Interventions Required
1. School Improvement Grants (SIG) Schools	60	Transformation Model or Turnaround Model
2. ESEA Priority Schools	14	Alignment with ESEA Turnaround Principles

**GENERAL QUESTIONS**

**1. How are priority schools identified in North Carolina and how often is the methodology applied?**

Priority schools are identified every three years under ESEA Flex. A school can be identified based on the achievement of the "all students" group in terms of proficiency over a number of years. Additionally, a Title I-participating or Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years will be identified. Lastly, all Tier I or Tier II schools under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program are included.

**2. We have different types of priority Schools in our LEA. How do we distinguish one from another?**

There are four different types of priority schools in North Carolina. Identified schools in your LEA will fall into one of the four categories noted below:

- SIG Cohort I Schools – originally approved in 2010, these schools completed the final year of the grant in the 2012-13 school year (SY)

- SIG Cohort II Schools – originally approved in 2011 and completing the final year of the grant in SY 2013-14
- ESEA Priority Schools - identified under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request approved in 2012
- SIG Cohort III Schools – approved in June, 2013 and implementing year one of SIG in SY 2013-14

**3. If a school remains in priority status for 3 years, but is also identified as a reward school for 1 year, could a school possibly be in 2 categories at the same time?**

Yes. Schools initially identified as Priority could make substantial progress during the course of the three-year period and could be identified as a Reward school in a subsequent year (as Reward schools are identified annually).

**4. Where can I obtain additional information relative to priority schools in North Carolina?**

The NC Priority Schools Wiki can be found at <http://ncprioritysigsupport.wikispaces.com/> and includes:

- The North Carolina Priority Schools Reference Guide
- Links to District and School rubrics for the NC Comprehensive Needs Assessments
- Additional information on NC Indistar
- The Priority School Quality Review template for SY 2013-14

**5. Who are the fourteen schools included in the list of ESEA priority schools?**

The following schools are noted as ESEA Priority schools in NC for SY 2013-14:

- Mountain Youth (Cherokee)
- North Whiteville Academy (Whiteville City)
- Doris Henderson Newcomers (Guilford)
- Balfour Education Center (Henderson)
- Monticello School (Iredell-Statesville)
- South Campus Community High (Johnston)
- Lenoir County Learning Academy (Lenoir)
- Turning Point Academy (CMS)
- Lincoln Heights Academy (CMS)
- Fairgrove Middle School (Robeson)
- Rutherford Opportunity Center (Rutherford)
- Meadowbrook Academy (Stokes)
- Davidson River School (Transylvania)
- Crossroads Charter High School

**6. What interventions must an LEA implement in its priority schools?**

An LEA that has a priority school must implement meaningful interventions designed to improve the academic achievement of students in priority schools must be aligned with all of the following “turnaround principles” and selected with family and community input:

- providing strong leadership by: (1) reviewing the performance of the current principal; (2) either replacing the principal if such a change is necessary to ensure strong and effective leadership, or demonstrating to the State Education Agency (SEA) that the current principal has a track record in improving achievement and has the ability to lead the turnaround effort; and (3) providing the principal with operational flexibility in the areas of scheduling, staff, curriculum, and budget;
- ensuring that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction by: (1) reviewing the quality of all staff and retaining only those who are determined to be effective and have the ability to be successful in the turnaround effort; (2) preventing ineffective teachers from transferring to these schools; and (3) providing job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by the teacher evaluation and support systems and tied to teacher and student needs;
- redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration;
- strengthening the school’s instructional program based on student needs and ensuring that the instructional program is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with State academic content standards;
- using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including by providing time for collaboration on the use of data;
- establishing a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addressing other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students’ social, emotional, and health needs; and
- providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

## FUNDING

### **7. What is the period of availability regarding carryover funds for ESEA priority schools and will additional funds be made available?**

ESEA Priority Schools in NC:

- Received an allotment under Program Report Code (PRC) 105 in 2012-13, with funds set to expire Sept. 30, 2014
- Received a new allotment for 2013-14 under PRC 105, with funds set to expire Sept. 30, 2015
- Will receive an additional allotment under PRC 105 for the 2014-15 SY (pending federal budget requirements)

### **8. Can PRC 105 funds be used for other Title I and/or at-risk schools in our LEA?**

All funds (via PRCs 143, 105, or 117) are to support the identified SIG/Priority school and may not be used for additional schools in the LEA.

## **NORTH CAROLINA INDISTAR**

### **9. Have any changes occurred regarding the NC Indistar tool?**

All indicators have now been aligned with the NC Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), in addition to the Title I schoolwide components. NCDPI has worked to develop and refine a three-year turnaround process for identified schools with annual focus areas of:

- Year 1 – School Culture and Change
- Year 2 – Aligning and Adjusting
- Year 3 – Sustainability

For ESEA Priority schools, Years 1 and 2 (the original 28 Key Indicators) will continue to be the focus during the 2013-14 SY, with schools moving to sustainability indicators in 2014-15.

### **10. What about reports submitted within NC Indistar?**

Due dates for the semi-annual report submissions are November 1, 2013 and March 3, 2014. However, LEAs/Schools will no longer need to submit the Priority Schools Metrics report (this data collection is now automated at NCDPI).

## **MONITORING/PRIORITY SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEWS (PSQRs)**

### **11. How often will our priority school(s) be monitored and what type of feedback can we expect?**

Reviews may include 1-2 visits during the year and/or NC Indistar feedback. Documentation referenced in the NC Priority School Reference Guide (see item #4 above) should be maintained in the “Document Upload” on the NC Indistar Dashboard.

A shift in the report format will provide direct feedback relative to the 28 Key Indicators. For each of the indicators, the quality reviewer will provide one of the following comments:

- “Progress Noted” – indicating that the school team has adequately documented progress and that the on-site visit has confirmed the information provided in NC Indistar.
- “Revise Indicator” – indicating that the school team should revisit/reassess the indicator within NC Indistar.